

US Ambassador Richard Morningstar remarks at Jeyranchel Mine Clearing Project Phase II Opening Ceremony

July 8, 2014

It is an honor to be here to celebrate the completion of Phase I of the Jeyranchel mine clearing project and to join our friends and partners to inaugurate Phase II.

First and foremost, I want to congratulate ANAMA (Azerbaijan National Agency for Mine Action) on reaching this important milestone. Because of your hard work, 19 square kilometers have been cleared of 173 live mines and thousands of pieces of unexploded ordnance. Each piece of cleared ordnance potentially represents a life saved.

As the lead nation for this NATO Partnership for Peace Trust Fund project, the United States is delighted to lead the Jeyranchel mine clearing project into the next phase today. Over the next two years, we look forward to supporting ANAMA in clearing and securing another 23 square kilometers of land. And we are pleased that this project builds on previous work and contributes to developing a regional capacity in ANAMA.

I want to acknowledge the strong cooperation that has made this project a reality. The Azerbaijani government's continued dedication to the Jeyranchel project and commitment to fund half the project has ensured its success to date.

I also want to thank the NATO Support Agency (NSPA), which has executed the project in an efficient and professional manner.

And of course, I want to express my gratitude to the donors to the NATO Partnership for Peace Trust Fund, which keeps this project going. The United States has contributed more than \$1 million to the Jeyranchel project since its inception and has spent more than \$22 million on conventional weapons destruction in Azerbaijan since 2000.

We hope to provide additional support for Phase II, which is not fully funded. I urge the international community to continue to support this important initiative by contributing funds over the next 24 months.

Finally, my deepest gratitude goes to the ANAMA employees responsible for clearing unexploded ordnance from Jeyranchel. Every day, these individuals risk their lives to remove highly dangerous explosive devices from the ground so that others will be safe. We could not be prouder of your work.

Thanks again to all of you for your work on this important issue, and congratulations to everyone involved on reaching this important milestone.

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